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ABSTRACT

This report examines divergent views that may exist among administrators based on administrators' demographic characteristics and how these differences affect curriculum design for this group. It looks at factors, such as the person's age, gender, and ethnicity, that might have influenced whether or not an administrator completed a college/university administrator-preparation program and asks if the person found the training program effective. The study population consisted of the chief administrators of 3,881 private schools in California. A total of 256 surveys, which sought to determine what skills are essential to a novice administrator's success, were returned. The findings indicate that the surveyed group was mainly female, predominantly white, with a majority in the 41-60 age group with between 5 to 15 years of experience. Most held at least a master's degree, but only 48.8% percent had completed a college/university-level administrator-preparation program. Those who were most likely to have completed a training program were those who were most educated, who worked at schools with enrollments of 200 or more students, who worked in K-8 schools, and who were older. Among those who had completed a college/university administrator-training program, older administrators reported a higher degree of preparation for their job. (RJM)

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ED 429 353

The Efficacy of Administrator Preparation Programs: Private School Administrators Attitudes

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Introduction

In a paper read at the 1998 annual conference of the Society of Educators and Scholars (Hughes, Johnson, Madjidi, 1998), the authors presented findings from a survey of critical skills needed by private school administrators. It was our hypothesis that few private school administrators had received adequate formal pre-service preparation for their jobs even though the challenge of their positions is at least as great as that of the beginning public school principal. The findings of our study confirmed our hypothesis and pointed to a large need for training for private school administrators.

Given the diversity that exists among private schools in terms of size and classification, it became apparent that a "one-size-fit-all" training curriculum would not be optimal. This issue gave impetus to exploring how the views of administrators responding to the survey differed from one another. These differences, once established, would contribute to the development of customized curricula or continuing education opportunities for these administrators.

Scope of the Study

This study was conducted to examine the differences in the views that may exist among administrators based on their demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, years of experience, etc.), and how these differences would impact the design of curriculum for this group.

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In particular, the study will explore three research questions:

The first research question examines the differences that might exist between whether or not an administrator completed a college/university administrator preparation program based on the administrator's demographic characteristics such as age, gender and ethnicity.

The second research question focuses solely on those administrators who have completed a college/university administrator training program and seeks to examine any differences in demographic characteristics that might exist based on whether or not an administrator found the training program effective.

Finally, the differences in perceived importance of a number of training topics were examined based on the demographic characteristics of the participating administrators.

Sampling and Data Collection

The population for our study consisted of the chief administrators of 3,881 private schools in California. We surveyed 700 randomly selected private school chief administrators seeking to determine their perceptions as to what skills are essential to a novice administrator's success. Two hundred fifty six surveys were returned. We also sought suggestions for improvement to pre-service administrator preparation for private school administrators.

The survey instrument used to obtain the perceptions of the private school administrators consisted of two parts. The first part solicited demographic data on the respondents and their perceptions of the adequacy of their own administrative preparation programs as well as suggestions for improvement of such programs. Part two contained 24 items pertaining to administrative skills each of which the respondents were asked to rate on a 5-point Likert Scale. Data gathered by the survey were analyzed and reported using percentages, frequency distributions and Chi-square analysis where appropriate. Those results were reported in the 1998 publication entitled "Artistry, Craft or Science? A Study of Critical Skills for Novice Private School Administrators" (Hughes, Johnson and Madjidi, 1998).

Data Analysis

The demographic characteristics studied were summarized and reported in tables and graphs as appropriate.

For the purposes of this study, a series of Chi-Square analyses was conducted to determine whether any differences in observed and expected frequencies of responses to the variables identified in our three research questions were statistically significant.

In each instance, the individual demographic characteristic examined was cross-tabulated with the respective dependent variable. Observed and expected frequencies were calculated for each cell and the resulting Chi-Square and p-value were reported. The results were summarized and tabulated and areas where the results were statistically significant are pointed out.

Findings

Demographic characteristics studied include age, gender, ethnicity, years of service, age at which the administrator was first appointed, highest degree held, size and classification of the school at which the administrator serves.

Distribution of the gender of the respondents are depicted in Figure 1 below:

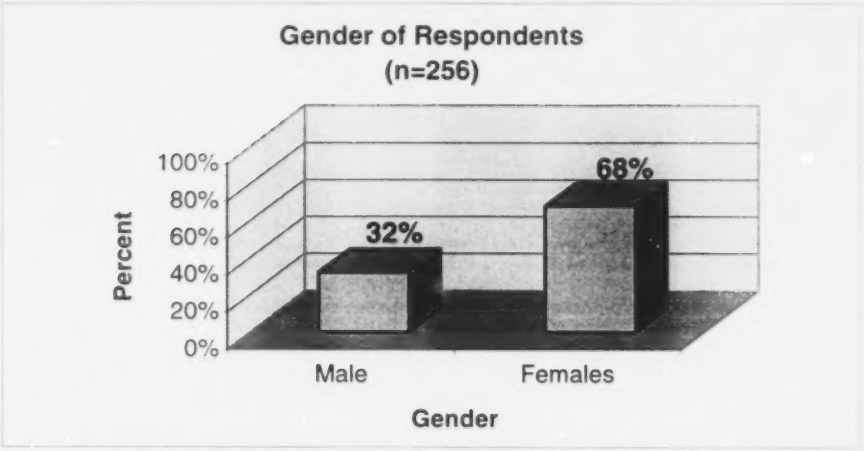

Figure 1: Gender of Respondents

Of the 255 respondents, 174 were female (68%) while males accounted for 82 (32%) of the responses.

The age of the respondents were measured in 10-year intervals beginning with 21-30 years of age and with the final group representing those who were over 70 years of age. Figure 2. represents the distribution of age groups of participants:

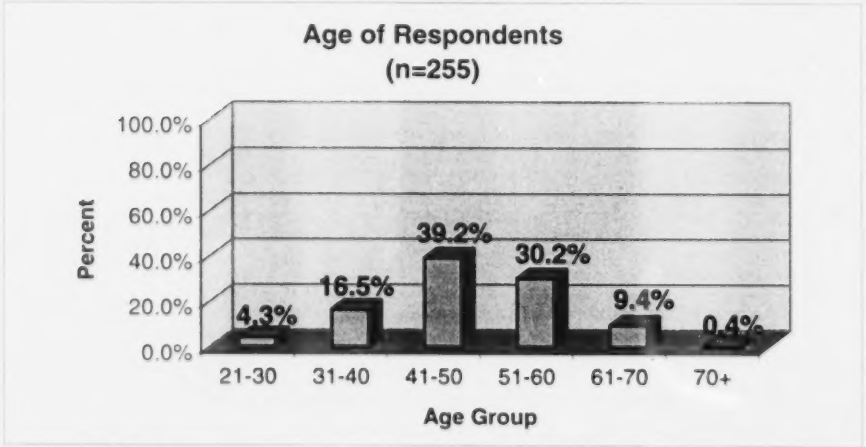

Figure 2: Age of Respondents

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The single largest age group in the study was the 41-50 year olds (39.2%). Sixty percent (60%) of the respondents were under 50 years of age while 90% were younger than 60 years of age.

Two hundred fifteen administrators reported their ethnicity. An overwhelming majority of the respondents (85%) were Caucasians. The next largest ethnic group in the study was African Americans at 6.3%, followed by Asians, Hispanics, and Native Americans at 3.2%, 3.2%, and 2.4% respectively.

Figure 3 represents the number of years of experience the respondents had. Years of experience were measured in 5-year intervals beginning with "less than 5 years" and concluding with "over 15 years."

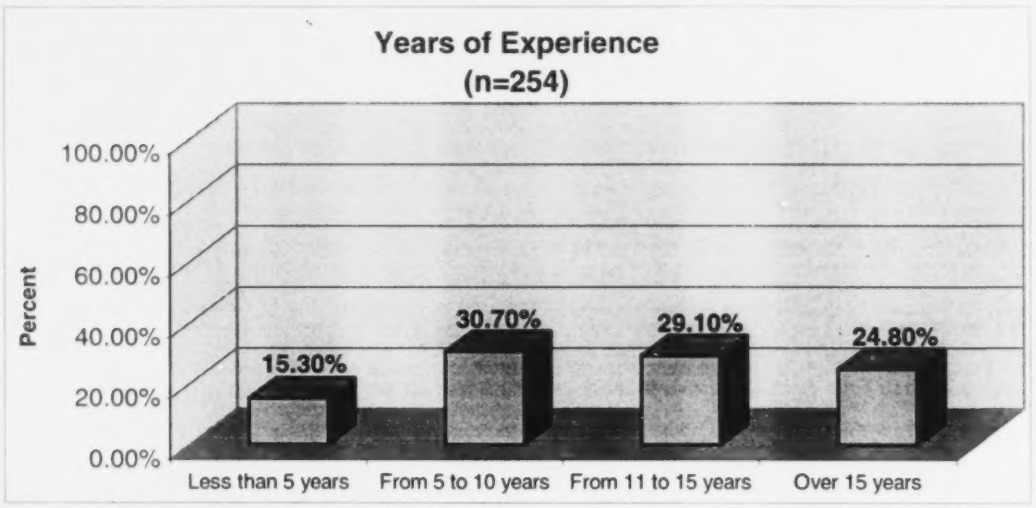

Figure 3: Years of Experience of Respondents

As can be seen, 59.8% of the respondents had between 5 and 15 years of experience. Only 15.3% of the respondents had fewer than 5 years of experience, while 24.8% of the respondents had more than 15 years of experience.

When asked at what age an administrator was first appointed, 65 out of the 255 respondents (25.5%) reported the age group of 21-30 years. A total of 179 respondents (70.2%) reported between 31 to 50 years of age, while 4.3% reported between 51 and 60 years of age.

Figure 4 represent the level of education of the respondents. As the figure indicates, among the 256 respondents, 19 (7.4%) of the respondents did not hold a Bachelor's degree, 62 (24.2%) of the respondents held a Bachelor's degree, 150 (58.6%) held a Master's degree, and 25 (9.8%) held a doctorate degree. The data indicates that it is more likely that an administrator holds a doctorate degree, than no college degree at all. Also, a large majority of the respondents (68.3%) held either a Master's or a doctorate degree, which indicates that overall, private school administrators are well educated.

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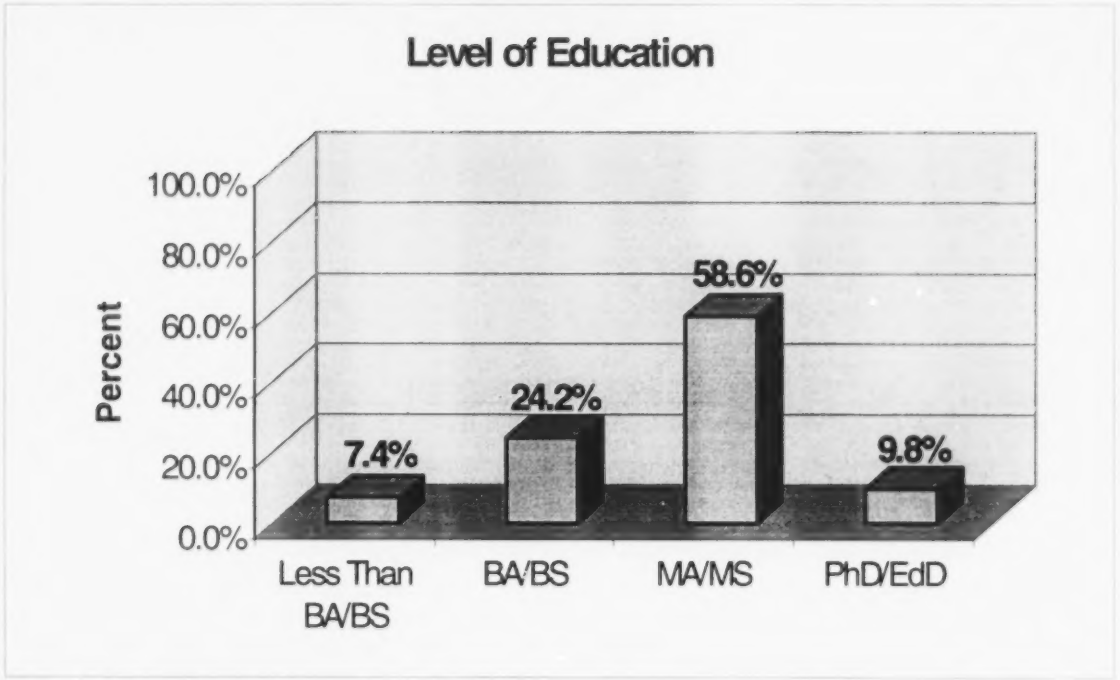

Figure 4: Level of Education of Respondents

The administrators in the study represented private schools of different sizes. Among the 229 responses, 83 (36.2%) represented schools with 100-199 students, 66 (28.8%) represented schools with 200-299 students, 36 (15.7%) represented schools with 300-399 students, 14 (6.1%) represented schools with 400-499 students and 30 (13.1%) represented schools with over 500 students.

Twenty five of the two hundred fifty four schools (9.8%) represented in the study were high schools with grades 9 through 12. K-12 schools represented 39 (15.4%) of the schools in the study, while 30 (11.8%) schools offered K-6 grades, 99 (38.9%) schools offered K-8 grades while 61 (24%) schools reported "Other".

Finally, 131 of the 256 administrators (51.2%) had not completed a college/university level administrator preparation programs while 125 (48.8%) had completed such a program.

Next, the relationship between whether or not an administrator had completed a college/university level administrator preparation program and the administrator's demographic characteristics were examined. For each demographic characteristic, a Chi-Square analysis was conducted. In each case, a Chi-Square and a p-value were calculated and reported. Table 1, below, represents the results of the Chi-Square analysis.

An important assumption to the Chi-Square model is the requirement that expected cell values are "large". There are several different standards for defining "large" expected cell frequencies.

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In this study, the standard applied was that suggested by Mason and Lind (1996), which requires that no more 20% of the cells in the table had an expected frequency of fewer than five and none had an expected frequency of zero. To accomplish this standard, at times, rows or columns were collapsed together. This practice is pointed out in the study when performed.

Table 1: Relationship between demographic characteristics of an administrator and whether or not the administrator had completed a college/university level administrator preparation program

Demographic Characteristic	Chi-Square Value	Degrees of Freedom	p-value
Gender	0.000110	1	0.99165
Ethnicity	3.823997	4	0.43035
Years of experience	4.761170	3	0.19014
Age at which the administrator was first appointed	0.298085	3	0.96039
Age*	8.671174	4	0.06986
Highest degree held	48.91774	3	0.00000
Size of school	15.43236	4	0.00388
School classification	12.37838	4	0.01475

* Age groups 61-70 and 70+ were collapsed together

There appears to be no statistically significant differences in whether or not an administrator had completed a college/university level administrator preparation program and the administrator gender, ethnicity, years of experience and the age at which the administrator was first appointed.

There are however statistically significant differences (Alpha = 0.05) based on the highest degree held (p-value=0.0000) size of school (p-value=0.00388) and classification of school (p-value=0.01475). The age of the respondent is also a statistically significant characteristic (p-value=0.06986), although at a higher significance level (Alpha = 0.1).

With respect to the highest degree held by an administrator, a disproportionately higher number of those administrators who held a Master's or doctorate degree had completed a college/university level administrator preparation program. Conversely, a disproportionately larger number of those without a graduate education had not completed such a program. The more education that an administrator has, the more likely s/he will have completed a college/university level administrator preparation program.

A larger proportion of administrators at larger schools (200 or more students) had completed a college/university level administrator preparation program as compared to those administrators at schools with enrollments of less than 200. Accordingly, administrators at smaller schools are less likely to have completed a college/university level administrator preparation program.

Fewer than expected administrators in K-12 schools reported completing a college/university level administrator preparation program. Conversely, a larger than expected number of administrators in K-8 had completed a college/university level administrator preparation program.

Finally, a smaller proportion of younger administrators had completed a college/university level administrator preparation program than older administrators. The older the administrator, the more likely s/he has completed a college/university level administrator preparation program.

Those administrators who had completed a college/university level administrator preparation program were examined separately. The relationship between how well a college/university level administrator preparation program had prepared an administrator and the demographic characteristics of the administrator were examined. In each case, a Chi-Square and a p-value were calculated and reported. Table 2, represents the results of the Chi-Square analysis.

Table 2: Relationship between demographic characteristics of an administrator who had completed a college/university level administrator preparation program and whether or not the administrator found the training to be effective.

Demographic Characteristic	Chi-Square Value	Degrees of Freedom	p-value
Gender	7.58480	3	0.05542
Ethnicity	9.30273	12	0.67688
Years of experience	11.83325	9	0.22287
Age at which the administratôr was first appointed	20.86957	9	0.01324
Age	14.9192	15	0.45725
Highest degree held	9.14219	9	0.42425
Size of school	14.55085	12	0.26692
School classification	14.77498	12	0.25397

There were no statistically significant relationship between how well a college/university level administrator preparation program had prepared an administrators for his/her job and the administrator's ethnicity, years of experience, age, highest degree held, size and classification of the school. However, the age at which the administrator was first appointed (p-value=0.01324) and, the gender of the administrator (p-value=0.05542), although at a higher significance level, were statistically significant characteristics (Alpha = 0.05 and Alpha = 0.1, respectively).

Those administrators who were first appointed at the age group of 21-30 years felt their level of preparation for their jobs was "average", while administrators who were appointed at older ages reported higher levels of preparation.

Also, male administrators who had completed a college/university level administrator preparation program reported a lower degree of preparation for their jobs, than their female counterparts.

The final step in the study focused on the degree of importance to private school administrators, those skills identified as critical to public school administrator. In particular, we examined the relationship between this degree of importance for each identified skill and whether or not the administrator had completed a college/university level administrator preparation program. For each identified skill a Chi-Square test was conducted and the value of Chi-Square and a p-value were calculated and reported (see Table 3).

Table 3: Relationship between the degree of importance to private school administrators place on those skills identified as critical to public school administrators, and whether or not the administrator had completed a college/university level administrator preparation program.

Question	Critical skills for beginning public school principals	Chi-Square Value	Degrees of Freedom	p-value
Question 1	Evaluating Teachers.	9.28668	4	0.0543
Question 2	Facilitating/conducting group meetings.	2.63731	4	0.6202
Question 3	Designing and implementing a data-based improvement process.	4.75965	4	0.3129
Question 4	Developing and monitor a budget.	16.97026	4	0.0019
Question 5	Organizing and conducting parent-teacher-student conferences.	5.30936	4	0.2570
Question 6	Establishing a scheduling program for teachers and students.	1.29537	4	0.8621
Question 7	Being aware of the State Education Code and school law.	4.52839	4	0.3392
Question 8	Managing food service, custodial, and secretarial staff.	11.12921	4	0.0251
Question 9	Establishing a positive and cooperative relationship with other school administrators.	7.06139	4	0.1327
Question 10	Delineating employee roles in a school setting.	3.26437	3	0.3526
Question 11	Relating to school board members and central office personnel.	6.67714	4	0.1540
Question 12	Knowing the ethical limits of the school system and balancing that knowledge with one's own professional values.	9.39482	4	0.0519
Question 13	Understanding how the principalship changes one's family and other personal relationships.	12.7004	4	0.0128
Question 14	Developing interpersonal networking skills.	8.93682	4	0.0627
Question 15	Encouraging involvement by all parties in the educational community.	11.19532	4	0.0244
Question 16	Developing a positive relationship with other organizations and agencies in the surrounding communities.	6.18673	4	0.1856
Question 17	Being aware of what it means to posses organizational power and authority.	11.50652	4	0.0214
Question 18	Being aware of why one was selected for a leadership position in the first place.	7.29056	4	0.1213
Question 19	Portraying a sense of self-confidence.	6.93960	4	0.1391
Question 20	Having a vision and an understanding of the steps needed to achieve relevant goals.	3.19338	4	0.5260
Question 21	Demonstrating a desire to make a significant difference in the lives of students and staff.	4.17820	4	0.3824
Question 22	Being aware of one's biases, strengths, and weaknesses.	3.01184	3	0.3898
Question 23	Understanding that change is ongoing and that it results in a continually changing vision of the principalship.	2.57353	4	0.6315
Question 24	Assessing job responsibilities in terms of the "real role" of the principalship.	8.28645	4	0.0816

The results of the analysis revealed that with regard to questions 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23, there were no statistically significant differences in the degree of importance assigned to a skill and whether or not an administrator had completed a college/university level administrator preparation program. That is, both those who had and those who had not completed a college/university level administrator preparation program had a similar view with respect to the identified skill. In fact, these skills were deemed either very important or critical by an overwhelming majority of the respondents as reported in our earlier study (Hughes, Johnson, Madjidi, 1998). These items included facilitating/conducting group meetings, design and implementation of a data-based improvement process, organizing and conducting parent-teacher-student conferences, establishing a scheduling program for teachers and students, being aware of the State Education Code and school law, establishing a positive and cooperative relationship with other school administrators, delineating employee roles in a school setting, relating to school board members and central office personnel, developing a positive relationship with other organizations and agencies in the surrounding communities, being aware of why one was selected for a leadership position in the first place, portraying a sense of self-confidence, having a vision and an understanding of the steps needed to achieve relevant goals, demonstrating a desire to make a significant difference in the lives of students and staff, being aware of one's biases, strengths, and weaknesses, and understanding that change is ongoing and that it results in a continually changing vision of the principalship.

Five items, developing and monitoring a budget (p-value=0.0019), managing food services, custodial, and secretarial staff (p-value=0.0251), understanding how the principalship changes one's family and other personal relationships (p-value=0.0128), encouraging involvement by all parties in the educational community (p-value=0.0244), and being aware of what it means to posses organizational power and authority (p-value=0.0214) indicated that a statistically significant difference existed (Alpha = 0.05) in assigned importance of these items based on whether or not an administrator had completed a college/university level administrator preparation program. In addition, four other items, evaluating teachers (p-value=0.0543), Knowing the ethical limits of the school system and balancing that knowledge with one's own professional values (p-value=0.0519), developing interpersonal networking skills (p-value=0.0627), and assessing job responsibilities in terms of the "real-role" of the principalship (p-value=0.0816), although at a higher significance level (Alpha = 0.1), also indicated statistically significant differences in assigned importance of these items based on whether or not an administrator had completed a college/university level administrator preparation program.

Every one of these skills was deemed by an overwhelming majority of responses to be either very important or critical. However, in every case, those who had completed a college/university level administrator preparation program assigned a higher level of importance to the skill than those who had not completed a college/university level administrative training program did.

Conclusions

The demographic characteristics of the respondents indicated that the group was mainly female, predominantly white, with a majority in the 41-60 age group with between 5 to 15 years of experience, most were first appointed to an administrative position when they were 31 and 50 years of age, and a majority held at least a Master's degree. Only 51% of the respondents had completed a college/university level administrator preparation program.

It was observed the more educated an administrator is, the more likely s/he is to have completed a college/university administrator training program. Those administrators in schools with

enrollments of 200 or more students were more likely to have completed a college/university administrator training program than those who worked at schools with enrollments of under 200 students. Administrators in K-12 schools were less likely and those in K-8 schools were more likely to have a college/university administrator training program. Finally, older administrators were more likely to have completed a college/university administrator training program than younger administrators were.

Among those who had indeed completed a college/university administrator training program, older administrators reported a higher degree of preparation for their job and those who were first appointed at 21-30 years of age who only reported an average level of confidence in their preparation. Also, female administrators reported a higher degree of preparation for their jobs than male administrators did.

Those who had completed a college/university administrator training program assigned more importance on a number of administration skills than those who had not completed a college/university administrator training program did. In particular, skills deemed more important to trained administrators focused in three areas. The first area was management skills, namely, developing and monitoring a budget, managing food services, custodial, and secretarial staff, and evaluating teachers. The second area included interpersonal skills, namely, understanding how the principalship changes one's family and other personal relationships, developing interpersonal networking skills, encouraging involvement by all parties in the educational community. The last area included leadership skills, namely, being aware of what it means to posses organizational power and authority, knowing the ethical limits of the school system and balancing that knowledge with one's own professional values, and assessing job responsibilities in terms of the "real-role" of the principalship.

The data revealed that only 51% of the respondents had completed a college/university level administrator preparation program. Given our earlier study has suggested that a large majority of administrators had reported a great need for such training, this large figure is alarming. We recommend that colleges and universities should actively offer training opportunities from in-service, to adult-learner-user-friendly graduate programs to prepare young administrators for the challenges they will be facing. Also, Superintendents of private schools should encourage and mentor young administrators to participate in such training. This need is particularly critical among younger administrators, at smaller schools with enrollments of less than 200 students, at K-12 schools, and among administrators who do not have a graduate education. In fact, our study suggests that administrators who hold graduate degrees feel better prepared for their jobs than those without graduate education.

Among those who had completed a college/university level administrator preparation program, those who were first appointed at 21-30 years of age reported less preparation for their jobs than all other groups. This finding suggests that training programs designed to assist administrators should have a strong practical component to it to assist those administrators who are young and with limited previous experience.

Finally, those who had completed a college/university administrator preparation program appeared to have a better understanding of the skills they in fact needed for their jobs. Those with this training placed less emphasis on management, interpersonal skills, and leadership skills required for their positions.

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